Is This Thing On?
Exploring Communication Strategies for Small Museums
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Communicating About

Events & Programs

Collections

Visiting & Engagement

Fundraising/Development
Events & Programs
Think like a reporter

- Create a media list
- Cultivate media relationships
- Don’t forget the basic details: Who, What, Where, When, and Why (or How)
- Know your likely audience and target them

Think like a reporter

- Create a media list for sharing program/event publicity and use it every time

- Cultivate a relationship with your local newspaper, radio station, or community-focused blog/Facebook page

- Always ensure your communications include the basic details for engaging visitors: Who, What, Where, When, and Why (or How)

- Know your likely audience and target your message towards them
Utilize routine

- Create templates for your press release as well as website, calendar, and social media listings

- Develop a process to ensure consistent and timely posting across all your channels - email/social media/web (know what postings are automatic and which require manual submissions)

- If you are using paid promotion
Take advantage of connections

- If you are partnering with a local school, NPO, library, business, or group - find ways to collaborate and share information (it will have a positive impact for both organizations)

- Can you identify community leaders, regional 'celebrities,' or familiar faces who may be willing to help support and share your message?

- Do your Board members/staff/volunteers have the tools/information to promote to their networks?
Documentation & Methods

- Are you able to acquire contact information from your guests?

- Take photos (staged & candid), assign as a duty to someone!

- Digital media may be primary outlet, but print media still important

- Consolidate info on different events

- Are you able to acquire contact information from your guests?

- Take as many photographs of the event as possible; look for staged shots as well as candid that help illustrate your purpose/story

- Assign a volunteer (or consider a small paid gig) that focuses only on this task

- Digital media is likely your primary outlet, but there is absolutely still a place for print (newspaper, flyers)

- Can you consolidate information (ex: a flyer that details all four presentations in a lecture series, or all programs in a summer season, rather than multiple separate versions)
5. Respect privacy

- Be transparent with how you collect and utilize donor/supporter/attendee information

6. Communications

- Beyond publicity efforts, did you ensure that other communication pieces for this event were taken care of? (Ex: contract; invitation; tax-deduction letter; thank-you notes, etc.)
Collections
WHY communicate about your collections

- Share the value of your collection
- Democratize history through accessibility
- Engage your audience
  - Twitter/FB emoji games
  - What’s It Wednesdays
  - FB: Ask for information about people and places
Types of communications

○ Social media
○ Email newsletters
○ Press releases -- consider publicizing “discoveries” and new gifts, collections related events like behind the scenes tours
○ Blogs

Make sure it is easy to find links to your digitized collection on your website, social media, and blog
Show collections in action. Make sure to include info (including catalog #) with post so that if others are interested, they can ask about it.

- Mix of silly and relevant/academic posts
- Include collections numbers or other identifying information so researchers can later ask you to find that object
- Instagram: Curate
- Facebook: Connect
Web Logs: Top 11 Reasons Why Using Blogs Matters

2. Blogs Are Easy To Create.
3. Blogs Are Easy to Edit and Update.
5. Blogs Are Easily Networked.
8. Blogs Allow Students Authorship.
11. Blogs create public and visible accountability for both students and teachers.

- Blog posts show up in web searches while items in collections databases do not
- Great way to preserve stories related to collections objects (also include in CMS, but blog posts are more easily accessible for other staff, board members)

* This handout is available online + others!
Share discoveries
Make a GIF to share how the card with moveable parts works.
Blog posts allow your collections to show up in web searches (PastPerfect online, Collector Systems, etc. do not show up in web search results)
How do you share what is in your collections?
Do you have an online database?
What audiences are interested in collections: general public, researchers, genealogists?
What are the best ways to reach out to each group?
How to engage a larger audience
Feet Through the Door

- Utilizing traditional media
- Gain a larger social media audience
- Community relationships
- Podcasts and programming
- Getting out to get them in
Local Media can reach a variety of audiences to get the word out on events and promote the museum as well.
Radio: Community/Non-profit often can promote events for free through a local radio station or with VPR
Newspaper: Have an event geared towards locals? Have the local paper run an article. It never hurts to ask.
Boost your events on Facebook. This is an inexpensive way to drive more people to your events and to provide data. This also connects more people onto your social media platform to increase those following your FB page.
Whether you’re dropping off rack cards, hanging flyers or getting a cup of coffee from your local coffee house let people know what going on. These community connections can lead to awesome collaborations: (PA pod casts)
Podcasts can lead to great programs as well as become the program itself. On the left we have a podcast created by the local high school. This summer he did a program on the research behind the podcast he and his classmates created. On the right we created a local program inviting community memories to speak about their memories of the town emceed by a local author. This open forum is currently being edited to add to a “Morrisville” living history.
Fundraising/Development
- Communications for Fundraising/Development about making connections, inspiring action
- Storytelling as a vital part of case building
- Utilize people who are passionate about you.
- Have the audience speak to the audience (if you want families to give, feature families. Retirees, feature retirees)
- Types of communications: letters/print, emails, video, one-on-one
7-minute video created for largest annual fundraising luncheon (existing donors, donors we would like to increase their giving, and a few prospects)

Available afterwards on social media, website, and for Development staff/board to use when talking to others about our org.

This year's focused on an object in our collection as an example of how we utilize and preserve collections

- Last year was about various areas of operations, stories from users/staff

Able to do because of partnerships & creative staff
What works about it?

- Bringing in other voices to talk about us (Outside, trusted, voice as narrator and person making the ask)
- Maximizing existing partnerships & finding new collaborations (ABC/Fox, ORCA Media, Opera House, Young Tradition, etc.)
- Utilizing what we’ve got: Great objects, engaging programming, knowledgeable people
- Bringing something new/unexpected to what people might know about us
What types of communication have worked for your fundraising efforts? What haven’t?

How do we talk about our value in a saturated market?

What are your active vs. passive Fundraising communication strategies? Which ones have worked for you?
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